

## THOMPSON AG EXCHANGE

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*Farmers can use best management practices, be environmental leaders and have profitable operations at the same time.*



Goats on Vincent Thompson's farm

Vincent Thompson lives and works on the Hardin County farm that his parents have owned since 1973. The farm is 160 acres of which 40 acres are leased out to grow corn and grain. It is also the location of Thompson's farm business, Thompson Ag Exchange and the Beck's Hybrids seed dealership. Thompson sells and delivers corn, soybean, rye, wheat and red clover seeds to area farmers.

Thompson, who is the current district supervisor and chairperson for the Hardin County Conservation District Board of Directors, raises 35 Charolais and Angus beef cattle, including 18 calves. The farm is also home to several breeds of goats, such as Boer, Lamancha, Sannen and Myotonic or Tennessee Fainting goats.

During his time on the farm, Thompson has seen farming techniques improve and searched for more ways to produce better beef cattle and meat goats, while introducing environmentally friendly practices. His latest project is installing

three alternative water sources or waterers for his livestock and fencing around the ponds, creeks and sinkholes.

"The Hardin County Natural Resources Conservation Service recommends fencing off bodies of water to keep livestock urine and feces from seeping into water sources," Thompson said.

Since then, Thompson has put that theory into practice to protect the Commonwealth's water resources and the health of his animals. Small changes in water management and accessibility for livestock will yield improved results in animal health. Depending on the season, size of the animal and whether it is lactating, cattle require between 3–20 gallons of clean water per day, while goats need 2–3 gallons daily. Water makes up 50–80 percent of an animal's weight.

Thompson said, "Livestock perform better with clean, fresh water sources because they are



less likely to be ill and will gain more weight.”

When Thompson attended a farm best management practices seminar in Radcliff, he heard about KY EXCEL Farm, which is Kentucky’s environmental leadership program. KY EXCEL Farm is open to all individuals and entities that conduct production agriculture, having land and farming crops or livestock or is an advocacy group for farmers/agriculture. Thompson joined the program and made installing waterers for his cattle and goats his program project.

A farmer has to do more than

install alternative water sources to keep livestock out of ponds and creeks. So, Thompson fenced off the areas where he wanted to limit livestock access. By keeping the animals out of the ponds and creeks, he has more control over improving their health and keeping the water cleaner.

Thompson is using a form of flash grazing around the ponds and creeks. This allows his goats and cattle to spend a brief amount of time around the bodies of water to keep the perimeters clear of invasive plants, such as water lilies. Usually, Thompson’s animals spend just one day at a time in the fenced area around the ponds and creeks. This gives them a way to gain weight by eating the plants around the water. Grazing is a pollution prevention measure that he uses to avoid applying herbicides or mowing to keep vegetation in check.

There are other areas on his farm where Thompson has

limited access to his livestock. Those areas are sinkholes. By fencing around the sinkholes, he can protect the groundwater from contamination by his herd. Thompson is hoping to stabilize those sites by planting apple trees, whose roots will hold the soil in place and filter out contaminants from stormwater runoff.

Besides being a member of KY EXCEL Farm and the Hardin County Conservation District, Vincent Thompson is heavily involved in other organizations where he can learn best management practices to use and share with area farmers.

Thompson is currently vice president for the Kentucky Goat Producers Association and Hardin County Cattlemen’s Association, president of the Hardin County Goat Producers Association and Hardin County Extension Council, member-at-large for the Hardin County Agricultural Development Board and a member of the Kentucky Cattlemen’s and Goat Producers Association.



Vincent Thompson’s farm in Hardin County



Vincent Thompson at his KY EXCEL Farm membership presentation